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Persian Gulf States - Muscat and Oman [10pp]

FILE No. 195/2

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

TOP SECRET.

SUBJECT.
PERSIAN GULF STATES. MUSCAT AND OMAN

PREVIOUS FILE:	
NEXT FILE:	

RELATED PAPERS.	
FILE No.	SUBJECT.

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SECRET

FILE NO. 195/2

SUBJECT: MUSCAT AND OMAN

RECORD OF TRANSFER OF FILE

NAME	DATE RECEIVED	NAME	DATE RECEIVED	NAME	DATE RECEIVED
MR. RENOUF	18.11.57				
MR. WILSON.	19.11.57				
F	25.11.57.				
Mr Dalrymple	8.1.59.				
F.	19.1.59				
Mr Dexter	5.5.59				
F	5.5.59.				

SEMI-ABSORBENT

SECRET

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F	19.1.59				
Mr Decker	5.5.59				
F	5.5.59				

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

195/2. 9

MR B. DEXTER

Top Secret

Mr Heydon

Do you agree Yes. ?

Yes HOH

HO 17/2

17/2/58

Heydon. I suggest that

Agree HO 17/2 at the point the closed

list is brought forward

HOH

TOP SECRET
PERSONAL

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
7 JAN 1959
195/2
CANBERRA

Mr Hill put no further action required L.D. 7/1.

58/6159.

A.H. Tange, Esq., C.B.E.,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

For information.

E. J. Bunting
(E. J. Bunting)
Secretary

Mr Hill, Miss Oldfield has checked with Mr Kevin who is not holding any previous T.S. paper on this.
Registry have no record of such a paper. Did P.M.'s sent it to us?
L.D. 7/1.

→ Mr Daborgable

Rec'd 6/1/59
J Plimsoll

→ There is a previous T.S. paper abt. this which Mr Kevin has held.
7/1/59

TOP SECRET 7

TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

31st December, 1958.

My dear Prime Minister

In the absence of the High Commissioner I am writing with reference to my letter of the 24th November in which I informed you of the decision to send to Muscat a detachment of the Special Air Services Regiment which had been serving in Malaya.

This detachment has already achieved considerable success in its objectives in the Oman but experience of the terrain and the difficulty of local conditions make it necessary, if pressure is to be kept up, for more men to be deployed. It has therefore been decided to send another 70 to 100 men of the Regiment to the Oman to support the detachment which is already there.

The United Kingdom Government has been reluctant to take this decision but we feel sure that you will appreciate the need to consolidate the initial success quickly and as unobtrusively as possible. All possible steps are being taken to avoid publicity about this but should there be any questions we shall take the line indicated in the second paragraph of my letter of the 24th November.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) I. W. BELL

(I. W. Bell)

The Rt. Hon^ble R. G. Menzies, C.H., Q.C.
Parliament House,
Canberra.

TOP SECRET

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
18 FEB 1959
193/2
CANBERRA

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TOP SECRET

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT,

CANBERRA,

TOP SECRET
PERSONAL

In reply quote No.

25th November, 1958.

Dear Mr. Tange,

I received yesterday evening from the United Kingdom High Commissioner's office the attached copy of a Top Secret and Personal letter to the Prime Minister about the situation in the Oman.

I am sending this copy for your personal information.

Yours sincerely,

R. J. Bunting

(E.J. Bunting)
Acting Secretary

A.H. Tange, Esq., C.B.E.,
Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA.

No record

Recd 26/11/1958
D/L (Smith) to sec 5/1/59 — Mr Lowden 27/11.
S. Mr Bunting
For our records file

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

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TOP SECRET
AND PERSONAL

24th November, 1958.

My dear Prime Minister

In the absence of the High Commissioner I am writing with reference to Lord Carrington's letter of the 15th November, 1957, about the situation in the Oman.

A decision has now been taken to send to Muscat a detachment of the Special Air Service who have been serving in Malaya and understand the kind of guerilla tactics required to deal with the rebels who are still maintaining themselves with some difficulty on the top of the very inaccessible Jebel Akdar. The S.A.S. are accustomed to operating in small parties in secrecy and we believe that they can have a decisive influence in the situation. Their number is small, about seventy or a hundred men including their ancillary services, and we hope that all publicity can be avoided. If questioned, the United Kingdom authorities propose to say that the S.A.S. have gone to train the Sultan's forces in the kind of tactics required. In fact they may by their own efforts be able to clear up the situation by dealing with what is left of the rebel forces themselves. We shall be obliged to take this line in the event of a leak since to reveal anything of the true nature of the operation would probably destroy any hope of its success.

In this operation every attempt has been made to avoid giving the Sultan the kind of help which can be represented as large scale United Kingdom military intervention in Arab affairs.

/On

The Rt. Hon^ble R. G. Menzies, C.H., Q.C.
Parliament House,
Canberra.

4 5/1/59

→ M Hill (for AHH file only)
H.S.

TOP SECRET

On the other hand, if we do not bring the matter to a successful conclusion, friendly elements in the Arab world will think that we have no longer the power to give effective help. Moreover, a promising sign is that the rebels are now believed to be in direct negotiation with representatives of the Sultan. The terms which they ask are considerably more generous than any which the Sultan has hitherto been willing to consider and we cannot be certain that they want anything more than a truce during which they would hope to receive further supplies. Nevertheless, the situation may offer some promise if military pressure is kept up on rebels.

Our main purpose has been and remains to enable the Sultan to stand on his own feet and maintain control of his territories. In addition to the plan for S.A.S. activities, an extensive plan has therefore been worked out for lending assistance to his armed forces and civil administration. Over and above the aid agreed in the negotiations with the Sultan leading up to the agreement which was signed in London on the 25th July, we are also considering a shorter term economic programme for the development of the interior of the Oman. This is designed to have quick results and to impress the inhabitants with the advantages of co-operation with the Sultan's administration. We are also pressing on with the reorganisation and re-equipment of his forces which is proceeding well.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) I. W. BELL

(I. W. Bell)

TOP SECRET

Top Secret
and Personal

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The Secretary,

Department of External Affairs,

Canberra.

With the compliments of the

High Commissioner

for the

United Kingdom

Office of the High Commissioner
for the United Kingdom,
Canberra, A.C.T.

18th November, 1957

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

2

15th November, 1957

In a recent saving telegram about Oman (W. No. 429 Saving of the 24th October), a copy of which was passed to your Department, the Commonwealth Relations Office informed me that on the 17th October a party of rebels came down from the mountains and engaged loyal troops and tribesmen. They withdrew when fire was returned by Muscat armed forces, but friendly tribesmen withdrew from Tanuf and Kamah.

Authority was given to the R.A.F. to give offensive support against the rebels taking hostile action. In the event, however, Muscat armed forces, with support from scout cars which occupied Tanuf and Kamah on the 19th October without R.A.F. aircraft having to open fire.

We believe that this sortie was led by Talib himself who is being harboured by three villages in extremely inaccessible mountainous country and I have now been asked to let you know that the Sultan is planning an attack on one of these villages and that in order to ensure quick success we have authorised R.A.F. support for the Sultan's forces if necessary. Offensive action would be limited to what was necessary to ensure the entry of the Sultan's forces into the village concerned, Habib, and maintenance of their position there. The authority does not cover destruction of the village.

In letting you know this I have been asked to say that it is possible that the action may not in the event take place, but if it does take place, it will be on an extremely small scale and our hope would be that it would escape publicity.

If the action does take place and becomes public so that the Foreign Office News Department are obliged to comment, they will take the following line. The Sultan's forces have for some time

/been

THE RT. HONABLE R. G. MENZIES, C.H., M.C.

pred

TOP SECRET

Been trying to locate and eliminate the rebel leaders who have taken refuge in the almost inaccessible heights of the Jebel Akhdar. Following reliable reports that they were being harboured by the village of Habib the Sultan instructed his forces to occupy this place. In view of the extremely difficult terrain where access is often limited to single-file tracks along precipitious slopes the R.A.F. have been authorised to give close supporting fire to the Muscat troops if this should prove necessary.

If asked whether British troops are participating in this operation News Department would say that the operation was being carried out entirely by the forces of the Sultan of Muscat and Oman. If subsequently it emerged that escaping rebels had been cut off by either the armoured cars or the Trucial Oman Scouts we should say that when the rebels crossed their path they were naturally snapped up. The armoured cars we should describe as having been left in Muscat and Oman as a temporary measure at the Sultan's request for training purposes.